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STUDY PROJECT

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MILITARY FAMILY PROGRAMS:
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

BY

COLONEL DANNY L. CRAWFORD

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

MILITARY FAMILY PROGRAMS: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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31 March 1989

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MILITARY FAMILY PROGRAMS: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Studies have shown that the well being of Army families is directly affected by both institutional programs and leadership actions at unit level. The growing level of resources and effort devoted to family programs has significantly increased since the first of a series of symposia concerned with family issues and programs was held in 1980. Although the institutionalization of the processes and procedures to address the growing requirements generated by these symposia appears to be effective, a major concern is the widespread perception on the part of family members that the leadership chain does not demonstrate family oriented attitudes and practices. Furthermore, the training that is designed to assist the leadership chain in dealing with family issues does not appear to be as effective as it should be. This study examines these closely related issues as they apply to active Army forces and presents conclusions and recommendations to aid in future policy formulation.

BACKGROUND

Army life subjects the families of its members to a variety of stresses. These include: family separations varying in length from a few days to several months; frequent, and always costly,

permanent changes of station, and constant adjustment to different command environments. The Army's response to these stresses is driven by two different approaches to providing family services.¹ One is the partnership, or reciprocal, approach in which the member pledges strong commitment to the Army, and, in exchange, the Army provides benefits and services that insure a reasonable quality of life for his or her family. The other is the utilitarian approach which is based on the view that family members play a significant role in decisions concerning enlistment and retention. According to this view, providing family benefits and services increases family members' positive influence on military members to remain committed to the service.

The impact of these two approaches on policies affecting family benefits and services are quite different.² Reciprocal responsibility argues for services based on family needs regardless of their effects on retention and readiness. The utilitarian approach adds or deletes programs and services based purely on whether or not they contribute to retention and readiness.

Research by the Army Research Institute (ARI) and the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) has confirmed what many Army leaders have intuitively believed for many years: family members directly influence retention and combat readiness. According to research provided by ARI, family factors account for approximately one-third of the factors which affect a service member's intent to reenlist.³ Furthermore, research has concluded that the Army spouse directly affects soldier and unit

readiness.

The strongest statement research can make about families and readiness is that "healthy families keep soldiers alive on the battlefield" . . . soldiers who enter combat or deployment situations distressed with personal and family problems are extremely vulnerable to combat fatigue, panic, poor judgement, and the loss of the "will to fight".⁴

Therefore, Army family programs designed to enhance quality of life and family well-being go beyond just being the right thing to do (reciprocal approach); they are instrumental in achieving Army missions (utilitarian approach).

Until recently, it appears that the reciprocal approach has dominated policymakers' rationale regarding quality of life and family support programs.⁵ The Army currently provides a wide variety of services and programs such as housing, child care, Army Community Services (ACS) activities, youth activities, medical care, recreation activities, post exchange facilities, commissaries, clubs, education, and many others. The former Chief of Staff of the Army, General John A. Wickham, firmly established the partnership philosophy in his White Paper dated 15 August 1983:

A partnership exists between the Army and Army Families...The need for reciprocity...is the basis of the partnership between the Army and the Army Family.⁶

However, faced with the prospect of increasingly smaller budgets and potential manpower constraints, current Army leadership is beginning to look at family programs and services from a more utilitarian viewpoint.

CURRENT GUIDANCE

The Chief of Staff of the Army, General Carl E. Vuono, has communicated strong support for families and family programs. In his address to the Army Family Action Plan Planning Conference on 26 October 1988, General Vuono stated:

We want to instill in our leaders the right values and proper habits...they must take care of soldiers and their family members...we want them to be sensitive to the needs of family members...what we want is a combat ready force that's supported by families whose quality of life is equal to that of the citizens of the nation they defend...Family programs are essential for the readiness of [the] Army...You can expect me to fund the priority family programs...We will fund those programs that give us the greatest payoff in terms of taking care of soldiers and families.

General Vuono's guidance appears to more heavily emphasize the utilitarian approach.

A balance must be struck between the partnership approach and utilitarian approach, because all family programs foster a sense of partnership and impact on retention and readiness to some degree. In order to assist the Army with this dilemma, major research programs have been funded through the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center (USACFSC). The agencies providing the research are: ARI, WRAIR, and RAND/Arroyo Research Center. Some of the results of their research have been referred to earlier in this paper. RAND/Arroyo is about to conclude a very practical study entitled "Enhancing the Effectiveness of Army Family Programs."⁸ This study has looked at service and

program use by Army families, the cost/benefit of these programs to the family, their contribution to readiness, and the future needs of family members. Hopefully, the results of these latest studies will assist Army leadership in establishing criteria to evaluate family programs and services.

The best document currently available to aid in assessing and improving family programs and services is DA Pam 600-19, Quality of Life Program Evaluation/Minimum Standards. This document is a guide for installation leadership to use in their evaluation of major functions and facilities. The programs included in this publication apply to married and single military and civilian personnel.⁹ Sixty-five broad areas are covered under two general headings: living conditions and duty environment. A quality of life model is provided against which the sixty-five areas can be evaluated using statistical analysis. There are two drawbacks to using this guide. There is no mechanism to prioritize programs, only to evaluate each program against its own minimum program standards. Second, the value of the analysis tool is limited to the accuracy of the data available.

Until more definitive studies are completed, Army leaders must make use of the best information available to them. Moreover, they must continue to evaluate family programs from both a reciprocal and an utilitarian viewpoint. A tremendous body of knowledge about the interaction between Army families, morale, cohesion, retention and readiness has been collected and disseminated by the USACFSC. Yet, clearly, more work needs to be done.

Unambiguous criteria on which to base decisions in this very important arena will enable leaders to better focus limited resources.

ENDNOTES

1. Georges Vernez and Gail L. Zellman, Families and Mission: A Review of the Effects of Family Factors on Army Attrition, Retention, and Readiness. p. 6.
2. Ibid.
3. U.S. Department of the Army, Department of the Army Circular 608-88-2, p.13. (hereafter referred to as "DA Cir 608-88-2").
4. Ibid., p. 14.
5. Vernez and Zellman, p. 7.
6. General John A. Wickham, Jr., White Paper 1983 -- The Army Family, preface.
7. General Carl E. Vuono, Army Family Action Plan Planning Conference, 26 October 1988, pp. 7-10.
8. DA Cir 608-88-2, p. 13.
9. U.S. Department of the Army, Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-19, pp. 3-5. (hereafter referred to as "DA Pam 600-19").

CHAPTER II

THE ARMY FAMILY ACTION PLAN

The U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center was created in 1984 as the lead agency under the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (DCSPER) to oversee and focus attention on Army programs and activities that provide support services to soldiers, their families and the military community. USACFSC is the proponent for the Army Family Action Plan (AFAP) which is the primary management tool to identify family concerns, determine required actions, and assign DA agencies responsibility to resolve issues. It not only directs actions and monitors implementation of initiatives, but it also provides for evaluation of programs on readiness and retention of the force.

THE AFAP PROCESS

The development of the AFAP begins at local community level where issues and concerns are identified. Many of these issues are resolved at the local level; others are forwarded to the respective MACOMs where they are addressed through MACOM action plans. Those that apply Army-wide are forwarded yearly to HQDA. At the annual Army Family Action Plan Planning Conference, family members and staff from local communities, MACOMs, and HQDA review and prioritize issues to be considered for the AFAP. Once an issue is entered into the plan, it is assigned to one of

twenty-four DA staff and field offices for resolution. Overwatch for guidance and direction of this process is provided by a HQDA General Officer Steering Committee which meets twice per year. The most current plan is AFAP V which has been published as DA Pam 608-88-2, dated 30 September 1988. The goal of the Army Family Action Plan process is:

...a fully coordinated, totally integrated soldier and family support program providing a quality of life for the Total Army Family which will contribute directly to readiness and retention of a superior force. This goal, so broad in scope, can and will be attained through the coordinated efforts of all levels of the chain of command, and all members of the Total Army Family.¹⁰

The phrase "efforts of all levels of the chain of command" is an essential aspect in the achievement of this goal, and it will be discussed in more detail later in this paper.

PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA

The guiding philosophy of the AFAP process is that soldiers are entitled to the same quality of life as that of the society they are pledged to defend.¹¹ Given the current realities imposed by limited resources, not all issues can be included in the plan. Four criteria have been identified to determine which issues are to be included and to determine their relative priority. They are:

Issues that contribute positively to the Army goal of readiness and retention of quality soldiers and families.

Issues that contribute to family strength, wellness and sense of community.

Issues that address the components of the Total Army Family Army-wide, thus requiring HQDA action.

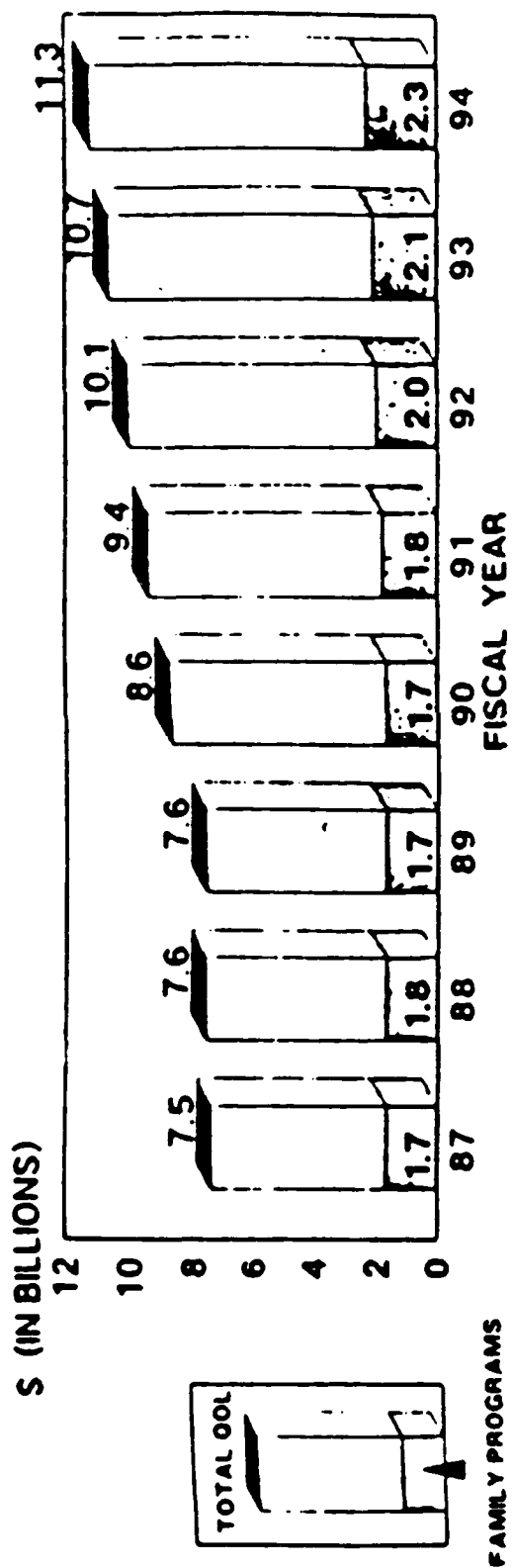
Issues that are judged attainable after weighing fiscal and manpower requirements against current available resources.¹²

The very broad, general nature of the criteria leaves a great deal of room for interpretation; practically any issue can be presented from the perspective of one or more of the criteria. Until studies and research are able to pinpoint more definitive criteria, it is probably best to keep it highly subjective so that issues can be debated openly in the various symposia up to and including the annual planning conference. Interestingly, there is a strong utilitarian tone to these criteria which argues for more definitive guidance.

RESOURCING GUIDANCE

Once an issue has been incorporated into the plan, the responsible staff or agency may determine that funds are required to successfully resolve the issue. The funding requirement must then be staffed through the Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution System (PPBES) process. Specific guidance for the planning, programming and budgeting of community and family resources can be found in several documents. The two most important are The Army Plan (Army Guidance Volume I) and the Army Program Objective Memorandum (POM).

QUALITY OF LIFE PROGRAM



SOURCE: The Army POM,
Summary Volume I
FY 90-94

QUALITY OF LIFE PROGRAM INCLUDES:

- FAMILY PROGRAMS
- MEDICAL DIRECT CARE PROGRAMS
- CONSTRUCTION (TO INCLUDE OSD ALLOCATION FOR MEDICAL CONSTRUCTION)
- REPAIR AND PRIMARY MAINTENANCE
- TRANSITION MANAGEMENT
- UNACCOM PERSONNEL FURNISHINGS
- CHAPLAIN ACTIVITIES
- DOD OVERSEAS SHOWS
- LIBRARY BOOKS
- COMMUNITY AND MORALE SUPPORT
- COMMISSARY OPERATIONS

FIGURE 1

The current Army Plan is dated December 1987 and covers the period 1990-2004. One of the listed goals during the planning period is to provide quality communities, with facilities and programs to support members of all Army components and their families. Specific guidance within the plan prescribed for the POM period (FY90-FY94) is to institutionalize quality of life and family programs and to achieve minimum standards consistent with DA Pam 600-19.¹³ The FY 90-94 POM funds family programs at approximately the FY 87 level beginning in FY 90 (see Figure 1).¹⁴

Resources for family programs have actually declined since FY 87 because there has been no increase to offset inflation. The situation will not improve until the out years of the POM. Furthermore, funds to support family programs are not "fenced", which means that local commanders have the flexibility to manage their budgets as they see fit to satisfy community requirements. Consequently, the capability of local commanders to determine resources required to meet the minimum standards specified in DA PAM 600-19 takes on even more importance during this period of diminishing resources.

Seeking low-cost or no-cost alternatives to the resolution of issues becomes even more necessary than in past years. Additionally, in order to retain quality services for soldiers and family members it may become necessary to pass on more of the cost of doing business to the users in several of the programs. This is already happening in many of the Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) programs. Increasing costs in the

child care program and the much publicized user fees for medical care are contentious issues, but they are being given serious consideration. These are only a few of the kinds of decisions commanders must struggle with in the face of diminishing resources.

ENDNOTES

10. U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center, Army Family Action Plan Report to the Family, p.14.

11. U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center, Family Support Division, briefing slide 7.

12. DA Cir 608-88-2, p. 3.

13. U.S. Department of the Army, The Army Plan (Army Guidance Volume I), pp. 21-22.

14. U.S. Department of the Army, The Army Program Objective Memorandum Summary, p. I-B-1-12

CHAPTER III

ASSESSMENT OF THE ARMY FAMILY ACTION PLAN

Since its inception the AFAP process has surfaced approximately 400 issues at the annual AFAP Planning Conferences.¹⁵ Not all of them survived follow-up "scrubs" for a variety of valid reasons: however, 189 have been included in the five plans to date. While the issues address a wide spectrum of concerns and activities, they can be consolidated into twelve separate categories: relocation, housing, family support policies and programs, family finance policies and programs, family member employment, volunteerism, education, child care, medical/dental, reserve component, unit/major command concerns, and AFAP and ACS support systems.¹⁶

RESULTS TO DATE

The institutionalization of programs and procedures to resolve the multitude of issues has been very effective. Of the original 189 issues mentioned above, all but 55 have been closed, and in the process of resolving them AFAP has accomplished the following:

- Nine new programs created.
- Thirteen existing programs enhanced.
- Eight legislative changes enacted.
- Seven non-regulatory policies created or changed.

- Eleven Army regulations developed or amended.
- Eight new Army pamphlets published.
- Nine programs for the construction or improvement of facilities initiated.
- Three computer systems under development.¹⁷

These accomplishments are impressive, but an important question in the assessment of AFAP is the extent to which the plans have had a positive impact on Army families and effected positive changes in their quality of life.

There is insufficient data available at the present time to adequately address this question. However, some positive impact can be inferred based on results achieved by AFAP initiatives to date. As previously stated, the AFAPs have focused heavily on issues and programs which affect the family environment, e.g., relocation, housing, spouse employment, child care, medical care, and education. The mere existence of Army Family Action Plans and the AFAP planning process have contributed to increased family satisfaction because the plans provide evidence of the Army's commitment to families.¹⁸

IMPACT ON RETENTION AND READINESS

As stated earlier, retention decisions are influenced by family considerations. There is no question that satisfaction with the environment for families will directly affect both spouse support and soldier satisfaction with military life. The linkage between spouse satisfaction and retention are reflected

in Figure 2. The data was obtained from the Annual Survey of Army Families: A Report on Army Spouses and Families in 1987. It shows that overall 84% of enlisted wives want the soldier to stay at least beyond his current obligation. The survey also determined that among spouses who are satisfied with Army life, 80% want the soldier to stay in the Army until retirement. By contrast, only 34% of those who are dissatisfied with Army life want the soldier to stay to retirement, and 49% want him to leave by the end of his current obligation.¹⁹ Since spouse support and satisfaction with military life are directly affected by the major issues being addressed by AFAP initiatives, it can be inferred from the results of this survey that the AFAP process has had a positive impact on both spouse satisfaction with Army life and soldier retention.

The impact of AFAP initiatives on readiness is more difficult to assess because there has been little research in this area, and on-going studies are not yet concluded. However, some conclusions are fairly obvious. Soldier performance is affected by absences from duty or distractions while on duty due to family problems. Additionally, subordinates' family problems require a great deal of the commander's time and energy. In a recent evaluation of Army Community Services and Youth Activities conducted by Caliber Associates, unit leaders indicated they spend an average of 15-20% of their total duty time addressing family problems of their subordinates.²⁰ All of the leaders interviewed said that family problems definitely affect job performance.

SPOUSE PREFERENCE FOR SOLDIER CAREER BY SOLDIER PAY GRADE

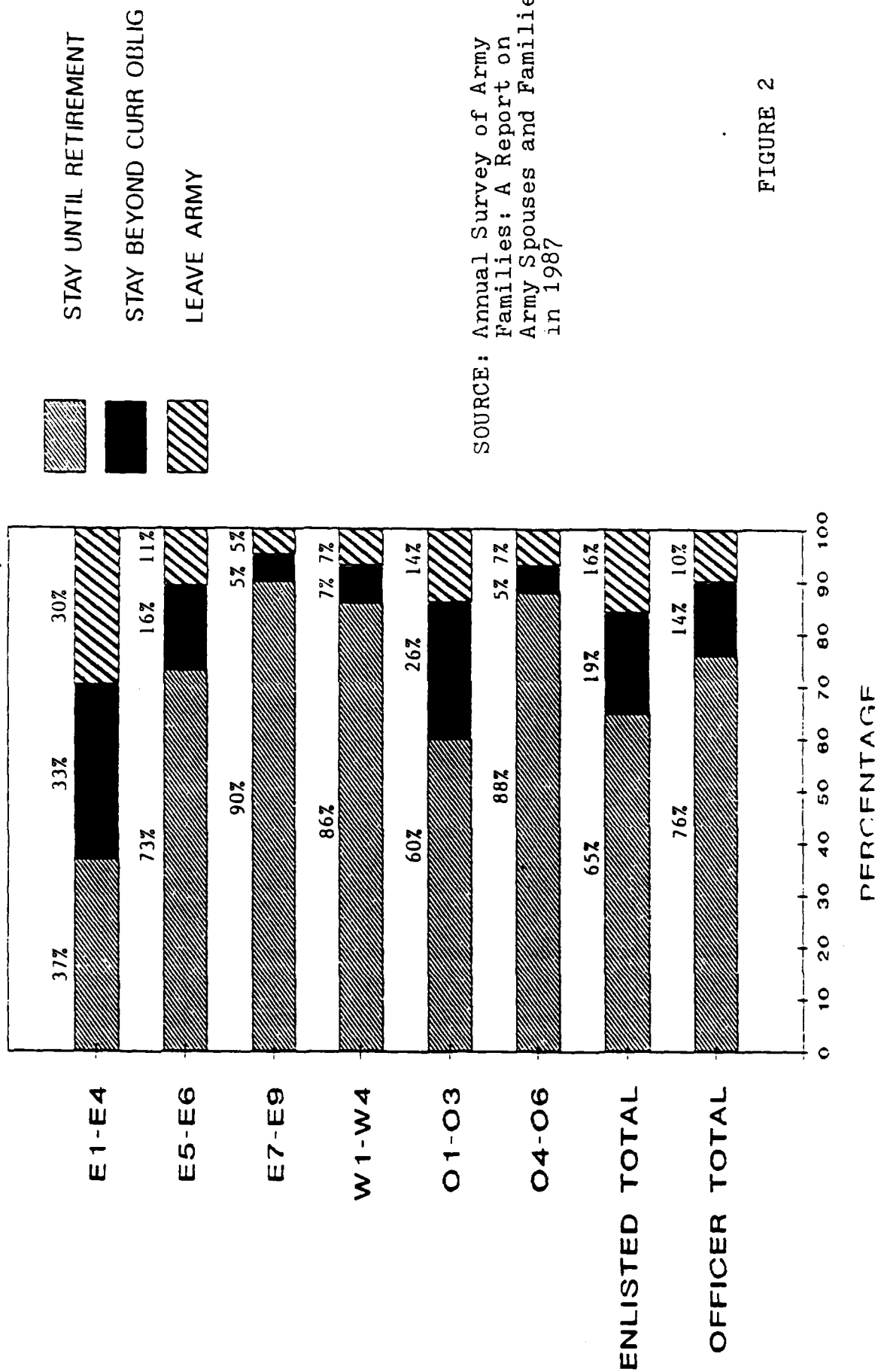


FIGURE 2

The kinds of family problems which impact on readiness are all addressed by one or more AFAP initiatives. Examples are: lack of adequate child care, financial problems, family advocacy problems (e.g. family violence), medical problems, housing difficulties, adjustment to Army life, etc. The degree to which AFAP initiatives resolve these kinds of problems decreases the time soldiers are away from their duties and the expenditure of time and energy required by the chain of command.

FUTURE ROLE

As a planning process and a management tool, the Army Family Action Plan has been successful. The five plans have generated a lot of activity and consumed considerable resources in the process of institutionalizing AFAP initiatives into Army systems. The impact of the AFAP process on readiness and retention and the well-being of soldiers and family members has been favorable. However, there are indicators that perhaps it is time for the process to change its focus.

In a study published in November 1987, Caliber Associates stated that many new issues appear to be less important than those presented in earlier plans.²¹ The study goes on to say:

If there is a problem with the AFAP process as currently structured, it lies in the enormous breadth of issues being addressed simultaneously with scant resources.²²

There is a real danger in the process continuing to proliferate issues when it should be focusing its energies on the improvement

of existing programs and services. If future AFAP issues are considered to fall into the "nice to do" category as opposed to being considered relevant to readiness and retention, the AFAP process will probably lose its effectiveness. As resources become more scarce, the emphasis of the AFAP process should shift from issue identification to monitoring and assessment of current initiatives.²³

ENDNOTES

15. Army Family Action Plan Report to the Family, p. 4.

16. U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center, Army Family Action Plan Research and Evaluation Annual Report 1987, p. 12.

17. Army Family Action Plan Research and Evaluation Annual Report 1987, pp. 10-11.

18. Caliber Associates, Assessment of Army Family Action Plans Executive Summary, p. viii.

19. U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center, Annual Survey of Army Families: A Report on Army Spouses and Families in 1987, p. 118.

20. Caliber Associates, p. viii.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., p. xix.

CHAPTER IV

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

Evaluation of issues and programs is an essential part of the AFAP process. The evaluation effort identifies family program strengths, needs, and weaknesses and suggests improvements to meet AFAP goals and objectives.²⁵ In consonance with this concept, the Annual Survey of Army Families (ASAF) for spouses of active duty soldiers was conducted in 1987. This first worldwide survey collected data from 12,000 civilian spouses of active duty soldiers on topics specifically related to a number of AFAP issues.²⁶ Some of the findings from this survey were referenced in the previous chapter. While it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the results of this survey in detail, analysis of the data revealed that the majority of spouses who were aware of and made use of Army programs and services were satisfied with them. Furthermore, the survey results suggested that some programs need additional support and/or improvement. However, the issue that causes the greatest concern does not relate to any specific program: it bears directly on leadership support and concern for families.

The relationship of Army families to the Army community and mission depends on the family's perception of Army leadership support to families. The ASAF asked about spouses' satisfaction with three levels of leadership support and concern for their

families: officers in their soldier's unit, NCOs in their soldier's unit and leadership Army-wide. According to the survey a significant percentage of spouses, both officer and enlisted, are not satisfied with leadership concern and support for families.

The data by officer spouse vs. enlisted spouse, by CONUS vs. OCONUS location and by MACOM shows that: First, as displayed below, spouses of officers are more satisfied than spouses of enlisted personnel with family support by all levels of leadership. The percentage in parentheses represents the response from junior enlisted spouses (E1-E4).

| <u>Leadership Level</u> | <u>Percent Satisfied</u> | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| | <u>Officer Spouses</u> | <u>Enlisted Spouses</u> |
| Officers | 67% | 40% (37%) |
| NCOs | 58% | 45% (40%) |
| Army-wide | 43% | 32% (28%) |

Second, for the most part, perceptions are similar OCONUS and CONUS. Third, there is relatively little difference among the MACOMs in terms of spouses' perception of leadership support for families.²⁷ The fact that both officer and enlisted spouses are more satisfied with their unit level leadership's concern and support for families than they are with their more distant, less understood concept of Army leadership points out the importance of unit leadership practices in this area to soldier and family cohesion with the Army.

According to Lieutenant Colonel James Martin of WRAIR, to most families the Army has nothing to do with either the Generals

in Washington. or the facilities and services at local installations. The platoon sergeant, first sergeant, and company commander represent the Army to most spouses. These are the leaders who control their soldier's life, consequently their own, and they have the greatest impact on whether or not the Army is a positive or negative experience for families.²⁸

The ASAF results and the findings from WRAIR point out the need for more added emphasis on support and concern for families by the entire leadership chain. Those who question this may point out that the problem is not too serious because of the high percentage of families that want their soldiers to stay in the Army (as discussed in Chapter III). The need becomes more clear by examining Figure 2 and Figure 3 together. Figure 3 clearly shows that the 17-20 year old market from which the Army draws its E1-E4 population is declining and does not recover until the late 90s. Figure 2 indicates that spouses who show the lowest preference for supporting soldier retention are those who are married to soldiers in pay grade E1-E4. According to a recent survey, 25% of first term enlistees are married when they enter the Army. and many more marry during their first tour of duty.²⁹ These facts point out the need for the leadership chain to demonstrate more concern and support for families, especially to junior enlisted families, not only because it is part of "taking care of soldiers" (reciprocal approach), but also because it will have a positive impact on spouse support for soldier retention (utilitarian approach).

DECLINING MARKET

TOTAL 17-20 YR OLD MARKET

IN MILLIONS



FIGURE 3

END NOTES

25. DA Cir 608-88-2, p. 5.
26. Annual Survey of Army Families: A Report on Army Spouses and Families in 1987, p. i.
27. Ibid. p. 103.
28. U.S. Department of the Army, Television Tape 20-797.
(hereafter referred to as "TVT 20-797").
29. Charlene S. Lewis, The Special Needs of Junior Enlisted Families, p. 2.

CHAPTER V

CHALLENGES FOR THE LEADERSHIP CHAIN

From a program and policy point of view, actions that increase both soldiers' and spouses' perception that Army leadership is committed to supporting families will have a positive impact on their satisfaction with Army life. The point to emphasize is that what Army leadership believes about support and concern for families is unimportant until it is transmitted in the form of actions which positively affect soldier and spouse perceptions. To the vast majority of families the most important interaction with Army leadership occurs at unit level. However, in order to provide the officers and NCOs at unit level the guidance and direction necessary to successfully deal with family issues, leadership above unit level must also become sensitized to and involved in family issues and concerns.

TRAINING FOR THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

The first Army Family Action Plan specifically addressed the need for training for the chain of command. The purpose of this training was to firmly integrate the Army philosophy and AFAP management concepts within the overall Army organization.³⁰ Training materials were developed by TRADOC and disseminated to all TRADOC schools which were training soldiers in grades E5 to O4. The training began in 1984. In November 1988, Caliber

Associates concluded an evaluation of the training for the chain of command initiative. The results indicate that much more needs to be done.³¹

Interviews and surveys were concluded with 51 senior leaders and 342 unit leaders. Approximately three out of five senior leaders and one-half of the unit leaders reported they had received formal training related to Army family issues or programs. The vast majority of both senior leaders and unit leaders were either satisfied or very satisfied with the training they received. However, the results indicated a problem:

Despite their overall satisfaction with the family-related training received, approximately one-third of both senior leaders and unit leaders thought that the training they received prepared them to handle the range of family issues they actually face only to a "little extent" or "not at all". Almost half of the unit leaders thought the training prepared them to "some extent" while only one³² in seven described it as to a "great extent".

The aspect of the training they liked the most was information on agencies, while the aspects disliked the most were that the training was not sufficiently practical, not in-depth, and not comprehensive.³³

It is necessary for the Army to provide services and programs to deal with problems that families encounter, and it is important that leaders know about them and know when to refer troubled families to those services and programs. However, this should not be the primary thrust of family training programs. The training should focus on leadership techniques of dealing

with healthy families. Leaders must be taught family characteristics and dynamics, and how to address family requirements (especially those of young enlisted families).³⁴ Moreover, they must be taught how to make family members feel welcome; how to assure family members that they perform an important role in the cohesion and readiness of the organization, and how to set up effective family support programs within their units. This training should be incorporated into all levels of leadership development training from PLDC through the Pre-Command Course. It is critical that Army leaders from section/squad level to the highest levels in the Army realize that the tenets of leadership apply not only to soldiers, but also to their family members. Today, more than ever before, the interpretation of the phrase "taking care of soldiers" clearly needs to be expanded to include soldiers' family members.

UNIT LEVEL FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS - - MINIMUM ACTIONS AND STANDARDS

DA Pam 600-19, Quality of Life Minimum Standards, was referenced earlier in this paper. It does an excellent job of delineating minimum standards for a variety of extremely important quality of life programs and services. However, it does not address minimum requirements and standards for unit level family programs. There does not appear to be any official document which sets forth these criteria. DA Pam 608-47, A Guide to Establishing Family Support Groups, and DA Pam 608-43, A Guide to

Family Member Predeployment Briefings, are helpful, but they provide guidance only; they do not establish minimum standards. Furthermore, they are somewhat limited because they only address family member support requirements that are created primarily as a result of separations, and dealing with separations is only one of the functions of an effective family support group. Clearly, there are many problems and challenges associated with family separations due to unit deployments; however, they can be substantially diminished if dealt with through in-place, on-going, effective family support groups.

According to the latest research from RAND and WRAIR, if family members perceive that their needs are being considered and if they are made to feel welcomed, respected and appreciated, they develop a sense of belonging with the unit. Furthermore, they are better able to cope with the unpredictability of military life.³⁵ The research suggests that unit level support systems and procedures need to address the following:

- Sponsorship and welcoming procedures. The first two weeks after arrival at a new location are the most critical in the development of unit cohesion with the soldier and his family. The ASAF revealed that over half of the junior enlisted soldiers and families were neither adequately sponsored nor received a unit or installation welcome briefing.³⁶

- Communications with family members. Some system should be devised (newsletter, letter from the commander, periodic meetings, etc.) in order to inform family members of upcoming signi-

ficant training events, especially those which cause family separation. The ultimate purpose of this effort should be to provide families the wherewithal to predict family time.³⁷

- Outreach procedures. Procedures should be established to ensure that junior enlisted spouses, and other spouses who are exposed to Army life for the first time, are provided the necessary support, information, and advice they need to help them adjust as quickly as possible to a new lifestyle.³⁸

Family members do not expect their considerations to be given top priority. What is important to them is that they have some sense that their needs are being considered; that they can count on a certain degree of predictability in their daily life, and that in a crisis there is someone in their unit they can turn to for help.³⁹

According to the most recent surveys and research results, all of the issues discussed in this chapter have the greatest impact on family well-being, and family well-being impacts directly on soldier morale, retention, and readiness. Not only do these issues have the greatest impact, but they are also "high pay-off, low cost" programs. Relatively few resources are required to implement actions, and actions, not words, will increase family members' perception that Army leadership is committed to Army families.

END NOTES

30. Caliber Associates, Evaluation Studies of the Implementation of Selected Army Family Action Plan Issues, p. 15.

31. Ibid., pp. 58-61.

32. Ibid., p. 20.

33. Ibid., pp. 21-23.

34. Army Family Action Plan Research and Evaluation Annual Report 1987, p. 20.

35. Ibid., p. 6.

36. Ibid., p. 21.

37. TVT 20-797.

38. Lewis, pp. 9-12.

39. TVT 20-797.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the early '80s the Army has expended a considerable amount of its energies and resources on family issues, programs, and services. This expenditure has been based on the philosophy that a better environment for soldiers and family members will attract, retain and motivate a quality force. Today, the Army does consist of a quality force, and the AFAP process which was developed to provide guidance and direction in this effort has been very effective in helping to create a better environment for The Total Army Family. Hopefully, the following conclusions and recommendations will assist all who are involved in the AFAP process as the Army faces the challenges presented by reduced budgets and a diminishing recruiting market.

CONCLUSIONS

- Family member satisfaction with Army life directly influences retention and combat readiness.
- The recruiting market of 17-20 year olds is declining, and more first term enlisted soldiers who are drawn from this population are married than in the past. Therefore, efforts to respond to the needs and concerns of young families become even more important.
- AFAP sponsored research to develop criteria on which to

evaluate and prioritize family issues, programs, and services is headed in the right direction. The best management tool presently available to decision makers is DA Pam 600-19. Local installation leaders must continue to update their data bases in order to be able to effectively utilize the models provided in the pamphlet.

- The Army's family programs will continue to be under resourced for the foreseeable future. Army leadership must look for innovative ways to maintain quality family programs and services.

- The Army Family Action Plan, as a planning process and a management tool, has been very effective in institutionalizing programs and procedures while resolving a wide range of issues and initiatives. More importantly, it has had a positive impact on family member satisfaction with Army life.

- A significant percentage of spouses believe that Army leaders do not demonstrate support and concern for families.

- Unit level leaders have the greatest impact on whether or not the Army is a positive or negative experience for families.

- AFAP training programs implemented through TRADOC have not been as effective as they could be. Only about 50% of the targeted leaders received the training and many of those were not satisfied with its content.

- A unit level family support group plays a critical role in the development of cohesion between the unit and family members. Yet, there is no directive which requires that one be established.

and there is very little formally published guidance on minimum required actions or standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Great progress has been made toward achieving the goal of a fully coordinated, totally integrated soldier and family support program which provides a quality of life that contributes directly to the readiness and retention goals of the Army. Senior leaders should not de-emphasize any family quality of life program until it has undergone the scrutiny of the AFAP review and study process. However, it is time to direct attention to more efficient management of existing family programs and to more effective training of the leadership chain on family issues which impact on unit cohesion and readiness. With these thoughts in mind, the following recommendations are submitted for consideration:

- The emphasis of the AFAP process should shift from identification of new issues and initiatives to more efficient management and comprehensive evaluation of ongoing programs. Research and study projects to evaluate issues and to determine the impact of programs on readiness and retention should continue under the AFAP process.

- Family programs and services should take into account the special needs and support requirements of young enlisted families.

- Family training programs for unit and senior leaders should emphasize: leadership techniques of dealing with healthy

families, family characteristics and dynamics, and how to address family requirements (especially those of young enlisted families). These programs should be incorporated into the leadership development training programs from PLDC through the Pre-Command Course. Family considerations should be included in the Army's doctrinal leadership manual, FM 22-100, "Military Leadership".

- Leadership from brigade to HQDA level should clearly communicate the requirement that every battalion and company level organization must establish an on-going family support system. The system should provide for the following: sponsorship and welcoming procedures, procedures to communicate with family members, and outreach procedures. Minimum standards must also be established within each of these three important areas.

In sum, in order to strike a proper balance between the utilitarian and reciprocal concepts of improving the quality of life of the Total Army Family, two separate, but interrelated, approaches must be followed. First, effective quality of life programs at installation level and above must be maintained in order to take care of major family issues, such as: relocation, family member employment, child care, medical, housing, family advocacy, and family financial programs. Second, the idea that taking care of soldiers also includes taking care of family members must become ingrained into Army leadership at all levels. Unit level leadership clearly must accomplish the lion's share of taking care of families; however, leaders at every level need to become more aware of how second and third order effects of their

policies and directives impact on unit level family programs. Readiness, retention, and the well-being of soldiers and family members are closely connected. The concerted efforts of all levels of the chain of command and all members of the Total Army Family will be required to keep them in balance.

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